

TO LOVE AND TO LAUGH

by

"EMILE"

*Scottish Comedienne Dora Lindsay
Finds Her Race a Joy and an Inspiration*

WHEN Dora Lindsay, Scottish comedienne, left Dunedin after her last tour of New Zealand, some eighteen months ago, the five Scottish societies there amalgamated at a gathering in her honour in the Town Hall. They "played-in" the haggis and they "played-in" Dora Lindsay in her Highland costume.

At the end, the whole audience stood up and sang "Will Ye No Come Back Again?"

"And now," Dora Lindsay told me last week in Wellington, "like the Australian boomerang, I have come back."

BUT though she loves her Scottish race, she can laugh at its queer little ways and crack jokes about them. They do it themselves, of course.

It is perfectly true, she says, and no legend whatever, that seeing the commercial possibilities in having a reputation for parsimony, the good people of Aberdeen set out to make the reputation pay.

She showed me a calendar that is written, printed and published from Aberdeen, with a joke for every day of the year. I read the first one.

Her Father: Are you quite certain you can support a family properly?

Cautious Suitor: Moo mony is there o' ye?

SHE told me perfectly true stories of her own experiences on the stage in Scotland, where she first appeared on the boards of the old Britannia at Glasgow at the age of ten.

Her mother had been on the stage before her, and her grandfather had given a command performance at Balmoral for Queen Victoria. She herself has done stage and vaudeville work in Glasgow, London, New York, Canada, South Africa and Australia, as well as New Zealand.

"And in the East?" I asked.

"Not with my accent," she said. There is an engaging twinkle in her eyes as she speaks.

THERE was the time she was playing a revue skit in Glasgow, for which she was using a bundle of old umbrellas. One day, in a tram-car in the city, she absent-mindedly picked up another lady's umbrella.

"The woman pulled my dress and said, 'Where are you going with that?'"

"I was full of apologies," I said. "Really, madam, I have no need to take your umbrella. I have plenty at home."

"She said, 'It's no wonder, if that's how you get them.'"

TO love people blindly and see none of their faults may be romantically glorious but it is also very stupid. To see every one of their faults clearly and still love them is to be wise, tolerant and human. This, without doubt, is how Dora Lindsay, Scottish comedienne now on tour with the NBS, sees her own race.

AND in one Scots town, she assured me, she was in the box-office taking the tickets for a community sing, when a man asked her how much it was to go in.

"Two shillings," said

Dora Lindsay.

And he said, "Can I get in for one shilling if I don't sing?"

IT'S true, what I'm telling you, she told me. I believed her. I believed her again when she told me of the time she was touring some two decades ago in the Highlands and her company came to a small town full of people who held theatricals so ungodly that no one could be found to give them lodging. In the finish, the only rooms the actors could find available were the cells of the local police station.

"We had great amusement calling to one another through the bars."

"And did the people come to the show?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," she said. "We had a full house. They would go to the performance. It was just that they didn't want to be contaminated."

"But it's not that the Scots are mean," says Dora Lindsay. "It's just that they're thrifty. They are an independent race. They are careful simply so that they won't find themselves dependent on other people."

She has played with Harry Lauder and Will Fyfe. When she was touring New Zealand, billed as the female Harry Lauder, she found herself in Christchurch with Harry Lauder in the theatre opposite under engagement to a rival company. She went over to see him.

"I went in and said, 'Well, Sir Harry, how are you getting on?'"

"Harry said, 'Drop the sir.'"

"I said, 'Hope you don't mind them billing me as the female Harry Lauder?'"

"He said, 'Look here, my lassie, if my name is going to do you any good in any part of the world, don't forget to use it.'"

This week Dora Lindsay visits Christchurch, and on to Dunedin, and then to Christchurch, Auckland and Wellington again before she sails for Sydney.

In October she intends to come back to New Zealand to tour with her own company of artists. She has lived in Australia for twelve years now, but she never forgets Scotland, and she still holds the box-office record in a double turn with Hart for the Glasgow Pavilion.



DORA LINDSAY

"... Like the boomerang I am back."